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Claim Amendments:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Claims 1-39 (Canceled).

40. (Currently Amended) A ceramic component, comprising:

a ceramic body comprising silicon carbide and an oxide layer, said oxide layer being ~~formed by oxidizing the ceramic body in the presence of alumina having a submicron particle size~~containing an amorphous matrix phase comprising silica and a crystalline phase provided in the amorphous matrix phase. the crystalline phase comprising anisotropically-shaped crystals comprising at least one of alumina and an aluminosilicate.

41. (Previously Presented) The ceramic component of claim 40, wherein the ceramic body comprises nitride bonded silicon carbide.

42. (Previously Presented) The ceramic component of claim 41, wherein the ceramic body comprises silicon carbide as a primary component, and silicon nitride as a secondary component.

43. (Previously Presented) The ceramic component of claim 42, wherein the ceramic body comprises about 5 to about 35 wt% silicon nitride.

44. (Previously Presented) The ceramic component of claim 41, wherein the ceramic body has a porosity within a range of about 5 to about 25 vol%.

45. (Previously Presented) The ceramic component of claim 41, wherein the ceramic body is formed by reacting a green body with nitrogen while heating, the green body containing silicon carbide and silicon.

46. (Previously Presented) The ceramic component of claim 45, wherein the green body is formed by slip casting a slurry containing silicon carbide and silicon, forming a cast, and drying the cast.

47. (Previously Presented) The ceramic component of claim 40, wherein the ceramic component is a refractory component.

48. (Previously Presented) The ceramic component of claim 47, wherein the refractory component is selected from a group consisting of support posts, support beams, support plates, and containers.

Claim 49 (Canceled)

50. (Currently Amended) The ceramic component of claim ~~[[49]]~~ 40, wherein the ~~oxide layer~~ crystalline phase includes ~~[[an]]~~ said aluminosilicate, said aluminosilicate comprising mullite, said mullite having a composition $3\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3 \cdot 2\text{SiO}_2$.

Claims 51-56 (Canceled)

57. (Currently Amended) The ceramic component of claim ~~[[54]]~~ 40, wherein the anisotropically-shaped crystals have an aspect ratio not less than about 3:1.

58. (Currently Amended) The ceramic component of claim ~~[[54]]~~ 40, wherein the anisotropically-shaped crystals have an aspect ratio not less than about 5:1.

59. (Currently Amended) The ceramic component of claim ~~[[54]]~~ 40, wherein the anisotropically-shaped crystals have a crystal size within a range of about 0.2 to about 20 microns.

60. (Currently Amended) The ceramic component of claim ~~[[54]]~~ 40, wherein the anisotropically-shaped crystals have a crystal size within a range of about 0.5 to about 10 microns.

61. (Currently Amended) The ceramic component of claim ~~[[54]]~~ 40, wherein the amorphous matrix phase comprises said silica and about 10 wt% to about 50 wt% alumina.

62. (Previously Presented) The ceramic component of claim 61, wherein the amorphous phase comprises at least about 12 wt% alumina.

63. (Currently Amended) The ceramic component of claim ~~[[54]]~~ 40, wherein the oxide layer is a surface layer.

64. (Canceled)

65. (Currently Amended) ~~[[A]]~~ The ceramic component of claim 40, comprising:
~~a nitride bonded silicon carbide body having a porosity within a range of about 5 to about 25 vol%; and~~
~~an alumina-rich oxide layer, said oxide layer being formed by oxidizing the ceramic body, the oxide layer having an amorphous phase and a crystalline phase, wherein the oxide layer is alumina rich oxide layer, having not less than 5wt% more alumina than an alumina content in the nitride bonded silicon carbide body.~~

66. (Currently Amended) The ceramic component of claim 65, wherein the ~~alumina-rich~~ oxide layer has not less than 7 wt% more alumina than an alumina content in the nitride bonded silicon carbide body.

Claims 67-69 (Canceled)

70. (Currently Amended) The ceramic component of claim ~~[[68]]~~ 61, wherein the amorphous matrix phase comprises not greater than about 25 wt% alumina.

Claims 71-81 (Canceled)